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## Policies regarding teachers earn C-

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BATON ROUGE — Louisiana is doing a poor job attracting new quality teachers, a decent job retaining them and it should have an easier process to get rid of the ones who don't measure up.

That's the opinion of the National Council on Teacher Quality, which studied state school systems nationwide with an eye on laws and policies that affect teacher retention.

Louisiana Superintendent of Education Paul Pastorek says he agrees with the findings, members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education say they find the report disappointing and the head of a teacher union finds faults in the study.

The report gives the state a C-minus in recruiting and retaining the best teachers and being able to "exit" — get rid of — ineffective teachers. Although the grade seems low, Louisiana shares it with seven other states and only seven states scored higher. Alabama, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma and Tennessee scored a C and South Carolina scored a B-plus. Thirty states scored D-plus to D-minus and six received Fs.

"I concur in the report's findings and recommendations," Pastorek said in an e-mail response to questions. "Louisiana has long been behind the curve on teacher preparation, quality and retention.

"However, based on the good work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality, Louisiana has been recognized as having a number of state-of-the-art policies that, given time, will result in better teacher preparation, quality and retention," he said.

BESE members said they believe that work should have resulted in a higher grade but Steve Monaghan, president of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, said he believes the grade is too high.

The study complimented the state on most of its policies and data collection systems but scored its procedures for identifying quality teachers a D-plus.

"The state fails to require evidence of student learning garnered through objective and subjective measures as the preponderant criterion of teach evaluations," the report says. "Louisiana's probationary period for new teachers is just three years and the state does not require any meaningful process to evaluate cumulative effectiveness in the classroom before teachers are awarded tenure."

Pastorek responded "The finding that tenure is granted in Louisiana based on the passage of time, not on the quality of the teacher, is a fair criticism. Tenure should only be granted to effective teachers and Louisiana's policy needs to be corrected."

On retaining effective teachers, the report gives Louisiana a C.

It says "Louisiana's policies for new teacher induction are commendable and the state's requirements for a non-probationary license are a step in the right direction toward measuring classroom

performance."

It also compliments the state on paying more for teachers to go to "high-needs schools" and school districts where there are shortages of certified teachers.

Louisiana began paying teachers based on performance under a measure pushed by Gov. Bobby Jindal to provide a \$10 million pool for rural parishes to reward teacher performance.

The report cites reasons teachers leave, but primarily focuses on the pension plan not being portable or flexible.

Monaghan said in all of his discussions with teachers who leave the profession, "I have not had one teacher tell me 'I'm leaving because I don't have portability of retirement.' I don't believe they identified the reason teachers are leaving the classroom in Louisiana. Did anyone ask teachers?"

Monaghan said that "in not one of the 70 pages" does the report mention actual reasons teachers leave. The most common complaints are weak school administration, discipline problems, lack of parental support, salaries and crumbling school buildings that are poor learning environments.

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